DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 144 EA 032 212

AUTHOR	Huber, Gunter L.; Kiegelmann, Mechthild
TITLE	How Do School Principals Acquire Leadership Skills?
PUB DATE	2002-08-25
NOTE	20p.; Paper presented at the 110th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Division 15, symposium on "Learning and Teaching Beyond the Curriculum" (Chicago, IL, August 25-28, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Education; Foreign Countries; *Instructional Leadership; Leadership; *Leadership Effectiveness; *Leadership Training; *Management Development; *Principals; Professional Development; Professional Training; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Germany

ABSTRACT

Teacher education in Germany has no subdiscipline dedicated to school administration. School principals and candidates for this position are offered short inservice training, but most of the necessary skills are acquired on the job. It remains unclear how principals master this challenge and to what extent these learning opportunities are available and effective. This is a report of a study on the acquisition of leadership skills. The study was conducted among 800 principals in secondary schools in a district in southwest Germany in spring 2001. Special emphasis was laid on the challenges caused by changing school systems because many principals had complained about restrictive structural developments. A high percentage of returned questionnaires demonstrated principals' interest in the study and supplied necessary information about demands on principals and their available or lacking competencies. The results--presented in text and in eight bar charts--show that participating principals see themselves as holding key roles within schools as "learning systems." Furthermore, participants feel that further training is urgently necessary, especially in areas such as group management, moderation of conferences, project management, and conflict resolution. The report also outlines the structure and content of possible training programs for ambitious teachers. (Contains two references.) (AUTHOR/WFA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 472 144

How Do School Principals Acquire Leadership Skills?

Gunter L. Huber & Mechthild Kiegelmann

August 2002

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Huber

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

EA 032 212

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How do school principals acquire leadership skills?[1]

Günter L. Huber & Mechthild Kiegelmann

Abstract

Teacher education in Germany has no sub-discipline dedicated to school administration. School principals and candidates for this position are offered short in-service training but most of the necessary skills are acquired "on the job." It remains unclear how principals master this challenge, and to what extent these learning opportunities are available and/or effective.

In Spring 2001, a survey was conduced among approximately 800 principals of secondary schools in a district in South West Germany. The results supply necessary information about demands on principals and their available or lacking competencies. Special emphasis was laid on the challenges caused by changing school systems, because many principals had complained about restrictive structural developments. A high percentage of return of the questionnaires demonstrated the principals' interest in this study. Some principals even added letters volunteering for interviews, thus breaking their anonymity.

The results show that principals see themselves as holding key roles within schools as "learning systems." On the other hand, they feel that further training is urgently necessary, especially in domains like group management, moderation of conferences, project management, conflict resolution. The study also outlines the structure and content of possible training programs for ambitious teachers.

Background

Unlike in many other countries, teacher education in Germany has no sub-discipline dedicated to school administration. School principals and candidates for this position are

EA032212

[1]Paper presented at the 110th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, August 25-28, 2002. Division 15, symposium on "**Learning and Teaching Beyond the Curriculum**"

offered short in-service training, but most of the necessary skills are acquired "on the job." It remains unclear how principals master this challenge, and to what extent these learning opportunities are available and/or effective.

In Spring 2001 the Ministry of Education in one of the German states was in need of sound empirical data on the state of the art of a program implemented to promote school development, called "internal school development". Above all, the principals' view of their degrees of freedom and abilities for decision making within the framework of this program should be taken into account. Therefore, the administration of one of four school districts in this state was asked to arrange a survey among all principals in this district. According to the general aim, this survey should answer particularly

- which factors were supporting the tasks of principals related to "internal school development";
- which material resources were necessary;
- which personal resources were facilitating the principals' work, and
- which support or advice principals needed from their own point of view.

A project group at the educational headquarter including school counselors and principals developed a questionnaire (Schöberle, 2001), which was sent to ca. 900 schools. Answers were sent directly and anonymously to our team at the University of Tübingen. Until the end of April 2001, 66% of all questionnaires were returned. The results of a first analysis were presented to the ministry of education in July 2001 (Amin & Sauer, 2001).

The questionnaire

The survey instrument consisted of 94 items, grouped according to seven thematic domains. Answers were given by marking an adequate rating (e.g., "important" or "less important") or by rank ordering some given alternatives. Each topic also offered opportunities to write open answers. The principals were asked to give information on the following issues:

- *Basic data of their school*, for instance type of school, number of students, average age of staff members, particular characteristics of staff;
- *basic information on the persons in charge,* for instance, number of persons in leading positions, real and ideal distribution of available time on specific tasks;

- *actual and intended school profile*, particularly as regards the further development of teaching, staff, and school organization;
- *roles and individual competencies of individuals in leading positions*, particularly as regards processes of change and necessary in-service training;
- *individual qualifications as well as use of support systems*;
- *necessary modifications of school conditions, especially conditions of change;*
- *job satisfaction.*

Results

1. Overview

In the following we summarize central findings according to the topic areas of the questionnaire:

Basic information about the school

The principals used the possibility to write open answers in the section "Specific characteristics of the staff" and expressed their concerns that the staff

- was composed very unequally: While the majority of principals are men, most teachers are women, which often work on part-time contracts (for instance: "Except the principal only women - all part-time!");
- was on the average rather old.

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of principals appreciated

- a generally positive attitude of staff members towards their tasks.

Basic information about individuals in leading positions

revealed that

- in 75 % of the schools the leadership "team" comprised no more than just 1 or two individuals;
- the majority of available time is consumed by "administration and organization", while the principals wished to invest most part of their time into the tasks of "school development" and "personnel management".

School profile

- In the domain of "*development of teaching*" the topic "multi-media" takes the top rank in retrospective statements as well as in planning for the future. In the following ranks we found "teaching and learning", "environment school/classroom", "school and vocational domains", and finally "programs of educational politics."
- In the domain of "*staff development*" the task of "team development" received the highest priority again retrospectively and prospectively. On the second place we found "in-service training tuned to actual needs."
- In the domain of "*organizational development*" the task of establishing "standards/educational consensus" is the leading topic in describing the past as well as the future of the schools. It is followed retrospectively by "participation of parents and students", prospectively however by "culture of evaluation".

Roles and competencies of individuals in leading positions

The principals ordered 15 determined roles according to their importance for their tasks.

- The first five places in the ranking are occupied by "to facilitate an atmosphere of trust", "to delegate and to facilitate self-responsibility", "to include staff members in decision making", "to challenge and to promote staff members", and "to accept suggestions."
- On the three last places we found "to facilitate a culture of feedback", "to care for resources", and "to determine goals."

As regards the importance of personal competencies we found (again chosen from 15 alternatives)

- on rank orders 1-5 "counseling competency", "dialogical skills", "communication management", "conflict management" and "constructive coping with critique;"
- on the three last rank orders "moderation techniques", "project management", and "monitoring group processes."

When asked, in which areas they would need assistance to develop competencies, they placed

- on top of the rank order (again chosen from 15 alternatives): "Time management", "conflict management", "competence in applying media", "project management", and "moderation techniques."

- on the bottom of the rank order "self-perception", constructive coping with critique", and "dialogic skills."

Qualification and support of principals

Only about 5% of all principals evaluate their own *qualification for leadership* as "very good", ca. 35% marked "good", about 40% "sufficient", and ca. 20% as "insufficient." About 55% of the principals did not mention any opportunity to receive "additional qualification except from their tasks within the school system."

Among available support systems, most used were "counseling by colleagues", "counseling by school inspector [Schulrat]", and "counseling by educational counselors/school counselors." The principals appraised these opportunities partially as more or less helpful, however, they did not prefer any of them in general. What they wished to be able to use was on the other hand "coaching" and support by "moderators and experts from school-external services."

Necessary modifications

As conditions for further development of their schools, the principals demanded modifications above all (declining frequency) in the fields of "workload for the leadership team", "staff members/selection of staff" (the latter is done by the ministry of education, not by local school authorities), "workload for colleagues", "time used for administrative tasks", and "teaching hours of principals."

Job satisfaction

About 64% of the principals are "satisfied", about 18% are even "very satisfied", but also about 18% evaluate themselves as "less satisfied."

2. Specific findings

Because of the differences in teacher training and job requirements, ve analyzed the results separately for the levels of the tripartite German school system.

Only during the four years of primary school education, do all children attend the same type of classroom. After grade four, (when children are about ten years old) parents have to choose for their children

(depending on school report and/or results of diagnostic procedures) among three types of secondary schools:

- The "Hauptschule" (grades 5-9) is meant for students who will afterwards enter the work force as apprentices (for 3 years of "dual system" training in the companies; principally "on the job", and additionally in special vocational schools).
- The "Realschule" or "Mittelschule" (grades 5-10) offers more theoretical (less applied) education, including at least one foreign language. A successful final examination, the "Mittlere Reife", gives access to engineering schools (or "Fachhochschulen" in other disciplines), where students study three years for certification.
- The "Gymnasium" (grades 5-13) offers direct access to all studies on the university level, provided that the student passes the final examination, the "Abitur".

Only nine years of school attendance are compulsory. Meanwhile the Hauptschule, literally translated as "main school", has become an institution for those students who were not admitted to or failed in the other two types of secondary schools. A long tradition of stratification along lines of social class and migrant/non migrant background of families affect school segregation as well.

- In addition, as mentioned above, we have to take into account the particular school type of vocational schools, which form part of the "dual system" of apprenticeship in private companies and schooling in state-run institutions. They are attended by all young people who sign an apprenticeship contract - independently of the level of former school training. Apprentices of similar trades are grouped together to form classes.

Basic information about individuals in leading positions

While there are only small leadership teams at elementary schools (and special eduction schools), Hauptschulen, and Realschulen - depending on the smaller numbers of students compared to the other school types - bigger teams including five and more persons are the rule at more than half of all Gymnasien and vocational schools.

In the following, the relation of time as really needed for various task domains and as ideally asked for by the principals is expressed by the difference of ordinal positions. If, for instance, a principal experiences "administration and organization" as most time-demanding and, therefore, places these activities at rank order 1, while he or she attributes the lower rank of 7 (out of 9 available positions) as most appropriate for this type of tasks, we find a difference of

real score - ideal score = -6.

Negative signs thus express that reality as compared to the principals' needs and demands is evaluated negatively. The principals want to spend less time for these activities than

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

they are forced to do by the real conditions at their schools. Positive signs, on the other hand, express that principals want to invest more time in particular tasks than they are actually allowed to do. Figure 1 shows the findings for the Elementary Schools/Hauptschulen/Schools for Special Education (see above). We skipped the figures for the other school types, because the overall tendency of answers is very similar in all schools.

insert figure 1 here

The problematic areas are quite obvious: Independently of school type, administrative tasks take much more time than the principals would like, especially as regards lack of time for school development. Next in the order of negative appraisal are time for teaching and time for meetings. On the other hand, principals would like to spend more time for staff management (and communication with students and parents - at vocational schools) than they can afford under the given circumstances.

School profile

School development

The blocks in figure 2 represent the percentage of principals, who marked a particular area of school development as important during the last five years (past accents) or as important for the future of their schools (future intentions).

insert figure 2 here

In all types of schools the use of multimedia had and still has high priority. The domains of "teaching and learning" and "school/classroom as environment" are placed very closely in the order of importance.

Staff development

"Team development" is on top of the list of goals, which principals tried to realize in the past and are planning to achieve with highest priority in the future. Comparing the results in figure 3, we can see that principals have adopted the notion of schools as "learning

organizations," which is promoted by the ministry of education. Therefore, besides planning in-service training according to the actual needs of their teachers (as opposed to official, top-down training programs) the principals will put strong accent on mutual hospitation in classrooms and opportunities of supervision.

insert figure 3 here

Organizational development

To establish common standards and reach a consensus about educational goals and means appears to be the most important topic of organizational development in all types of schools. Depending on school level, principals list "participation of parents and students", "school management", and "structures of communication and cooperation" as the next, lesser important topics during the last five years (see figure 4). When planning for the future, the task of developing a "culture of evaluation" at their schools is put into the foreground.

insert figure 4 here

Important roles of individuals in leading positions

As regards reflections about their roles and competencies, there are only gradual differences between principals of different school types. The order of topics is the same for all of them. In figure 5, therefore we find a general overview on frequencies, by which various roles were evaluated as important for the process of continuous change of schools.

insert figure 5 here

Important individual competencies

Principals of all school types were very much alike when they appraised the relevance of items given in a list of individual competencies. Figure 6 shows how frequently the principals marked various competencies as important for them in the past.

insert figure 6 here

Training needs

Figure 7 shows the same categories of competence as figure 6. However, here the principals rated them according to their relevance for future in-service training. High percentages indicate that many principals feel a need to become more competent in these specific domains.

insert figure 7 here

If we compare the figures 6 and 7, we can see that various competencies, which were marked frequently as important during the past years (fig. 6), do no longer appear among the most needed areas of in-service training (fig. 7). Most important for the principals seems to be a need of acquiring more competence in the domains of complex management capabilities like project management or time management.

3. How do school principals acquire leadership skills?

We mentioned in the introduction that there are no formal studies on school administration offered in German teacher education. Now, in case they are not "born leaders", where do principals learn what they need to solve their tasks successfully?

Principals of all school types rated as most helpful their learning experiences in leadership roles outside school (see figure 8), for instance as presidents or vice-presidents of volunteer organizations, which are numerous in German communities. Figure 8 shows the percentage of principals that mentioned a particular opportunity of learning as helpful for their actual duties. Since they formulated open answers, they could mention more than one occasion of skill acquirement; thus, the numbers do not add up to 100%.

Next in the order of learning opportunities follow experiences "on the former job", above all as teachers responsible for the organization of the syllabus of a particular discipline or as administrators of various school equipments like instruments and materials for teaching physics or chemistry, etc.

Of course, the ministry of education offers introductory courses of 1-2 weeks for prospective principals as well as in-service courses particularly for principals. However, these courses, usually organized in so-called "Lehrerakademien", training institutions for teachers run by the state, are not evaluated too high. As regards formal training in academies, many principals used the opportunity to add remarks to their answers. What

they wrote again and again is that neither as teachers before they came into the position of being principals nor as principals did they find time to prepare themselves adequately for these courses or to elaborate later on what they had learned there.

References:

Amin, R., & Sauer, H. (2001). Die Rolle der Schulleitung im lernenden System Schule. Die „Tübinger Untersuchung" [The role of principals within the learning system of a school. The "Tübingen Study"]. Unpublished report to the Ministry of Education. Oberschulamt Tübingen.

Schöberle, W. (2001). Die Rolle der Schulleitung im lernenden System Schule. [The role of principals within the learning system of a school.] Unpublished questionnaire. Oberschulamt Tübingen.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Fig. 1: *Relation of really needed to ideally demanded time for particular tasks*

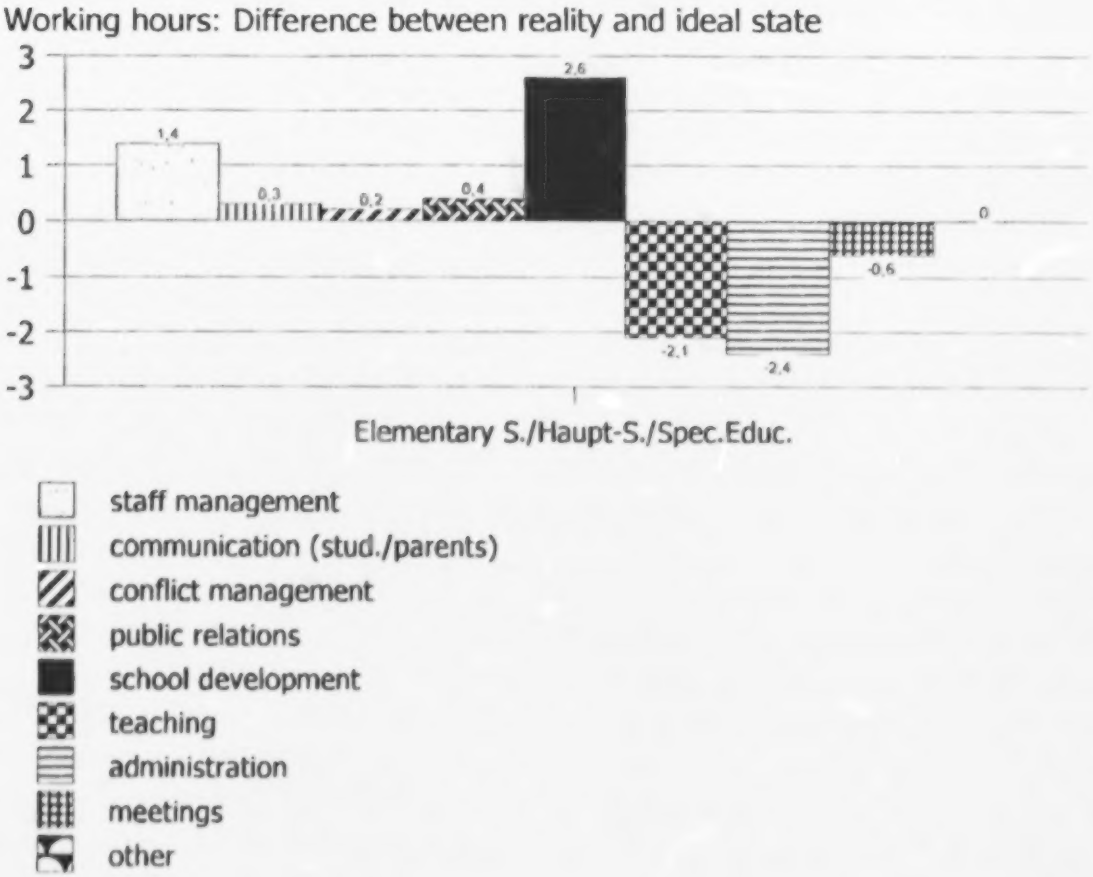


Fig. 2: *School development*

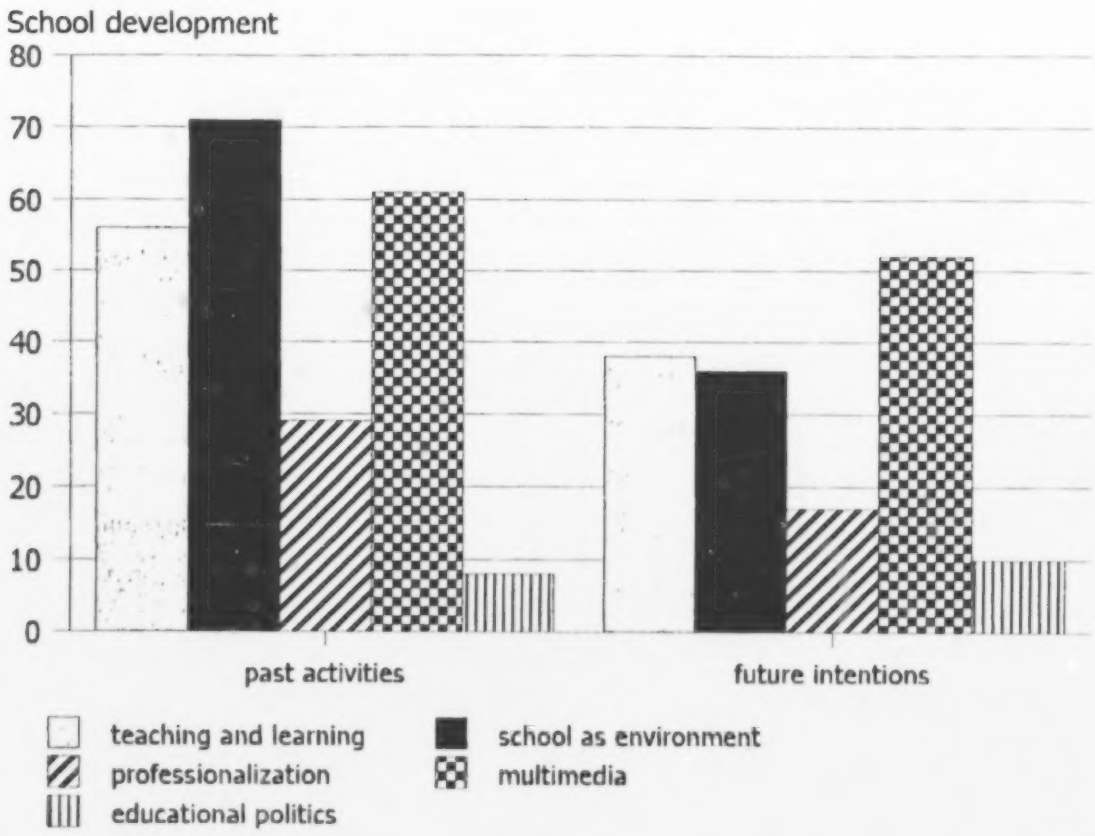


Fig. 3: *Staff development*

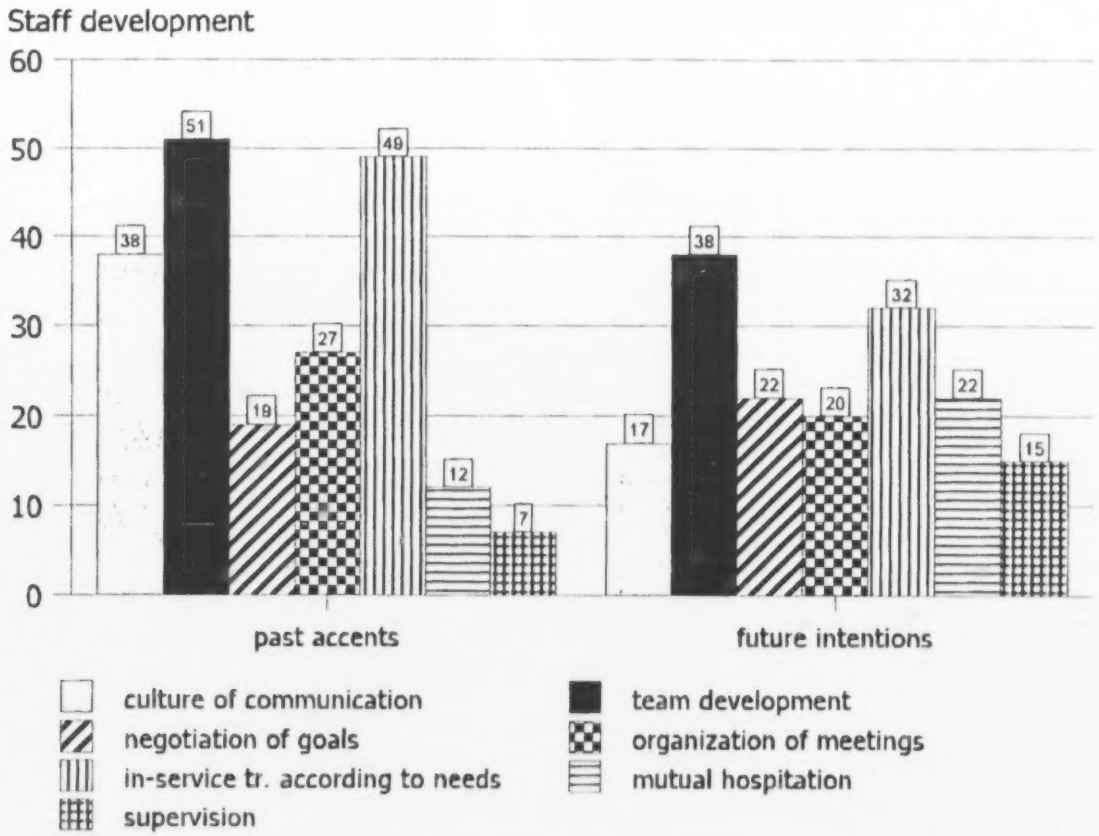


Fig. 4: Organizational development

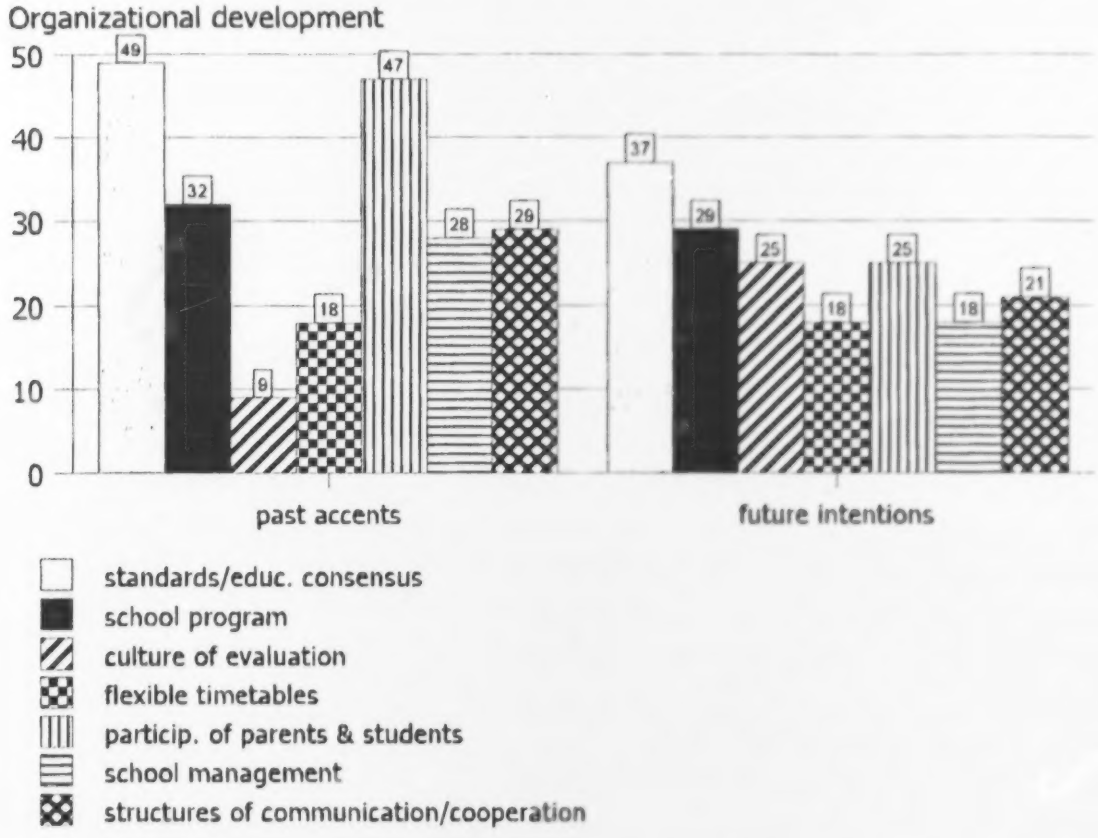
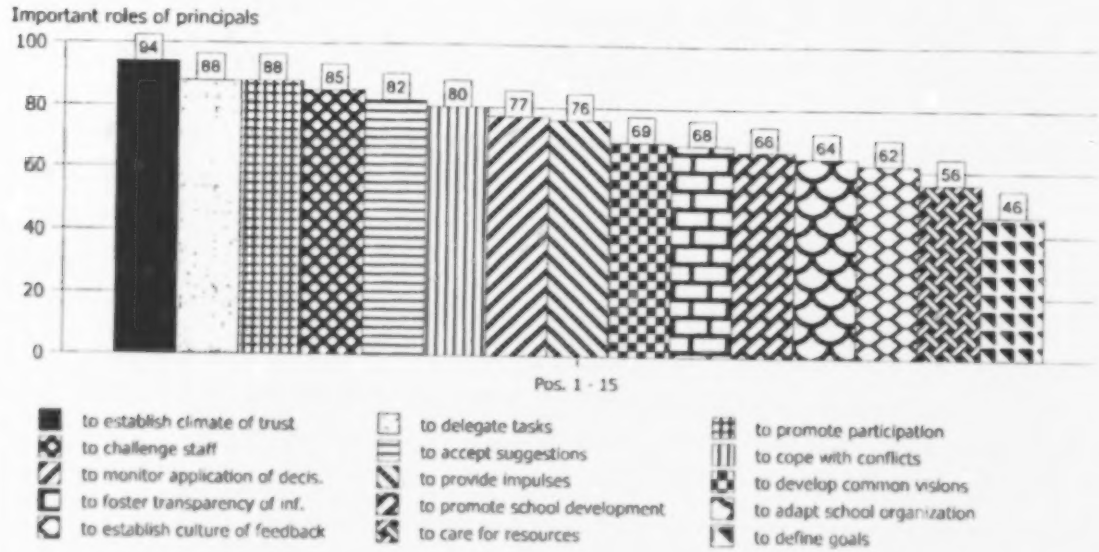
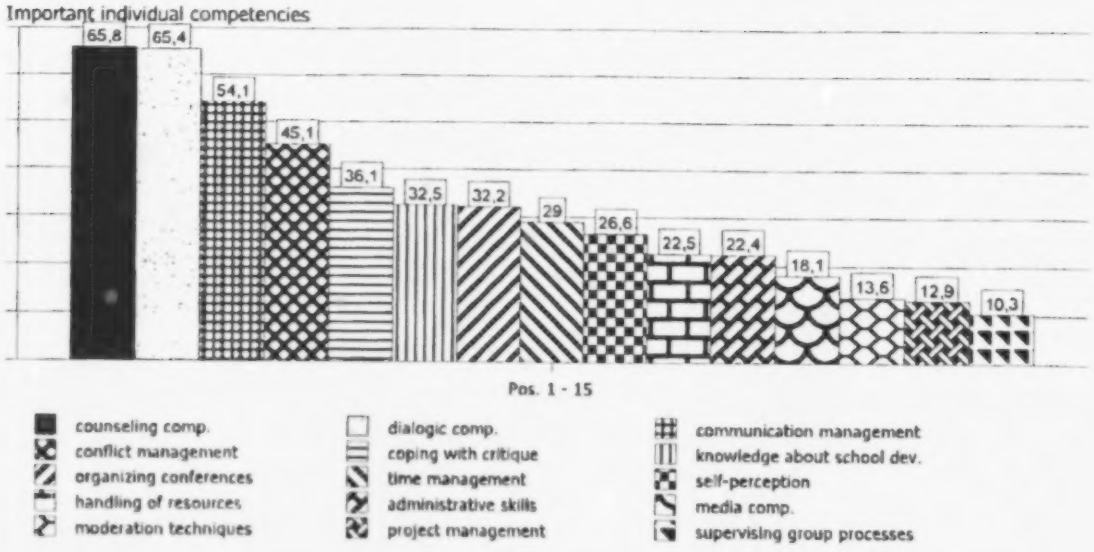


Fig. 5: *Important roles of principals*



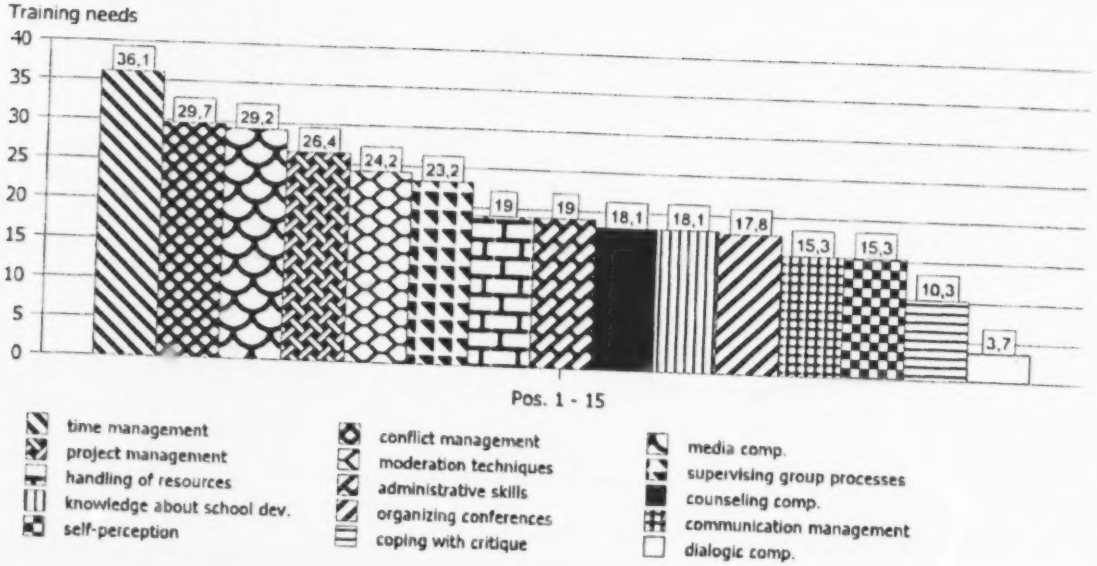
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Fig 6: *Important individual competencies*



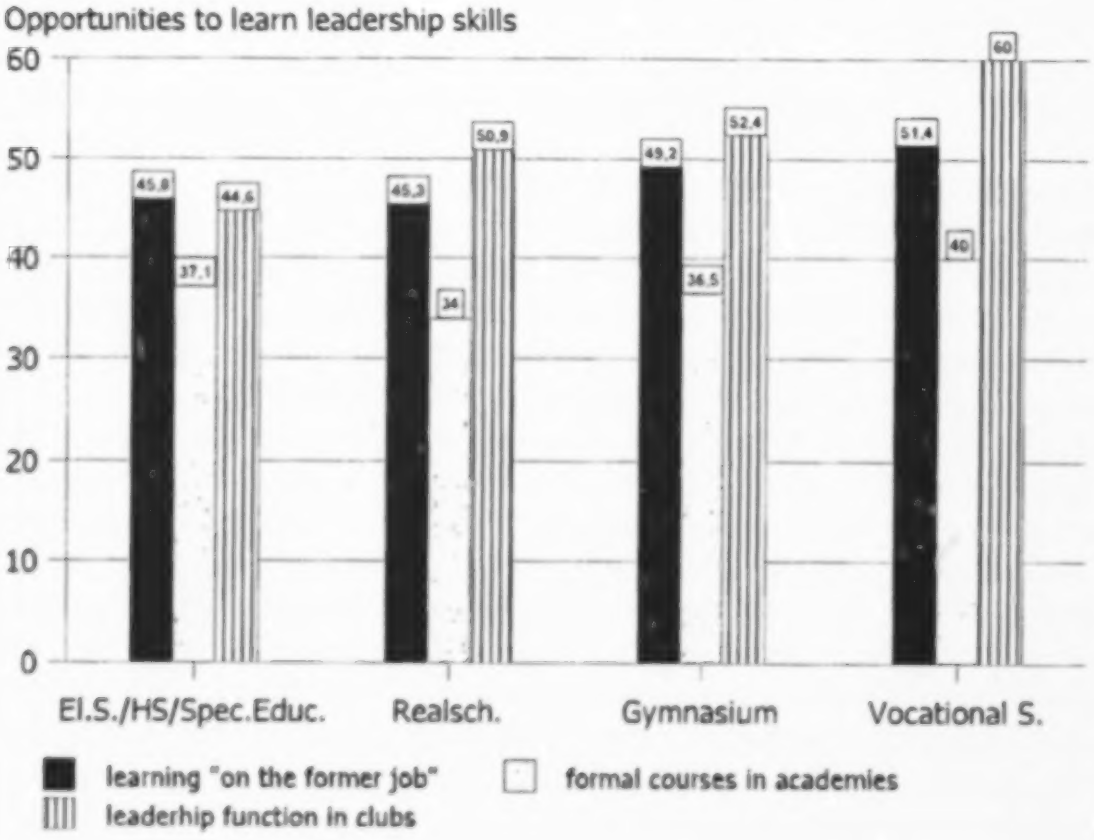
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Fig. 7: *Training needs*



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Fig. 8: *Opportunities to learn leadership skills as mentioned by principals (in % of principals)*



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: How do school proncipals acquire leadership skills?	
Author(s): Günter L. Huber & Hechthild Kiegelmann	
Corporate Source: University of Tübingen	Publication Date: 25, Aug. 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to each document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified documents, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Günter L. Huber

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1 ☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A ☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B ☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate these documents as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, →

Signature: Günter L. Huber

Printed Name/Position/Title: Günter L. Huber, Prof. Dr.

Orgonization/Adress:
Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Münzgasse 22-30, 72074 Tübingen, Germany
Telephone: +49-07071-2972113
Fax: +49-07071-294954
e-mail: huber.paedpsy@uni-tuebingen.de

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of these documents from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of these documents. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC Counseling & Student Services
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
201 Ferguson Building
PO Box 26171
Greensboro, NC 27402-6171